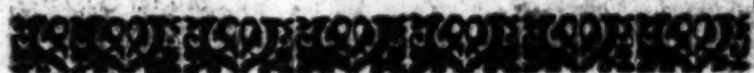


Dr. Chauncy's
S E R M O N

Cautioning against

ENTHUSIASM.



25

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Dr. Channing's

SEMON



1854

ENTHUSIASM.

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ENTHUSIASM

described and caution'd against.

A

SERMON

Preach'd at the *Old Brick Meeting-House* in *Boston*,
the LORD'S DAY after the COMMENCEMENT,

1742.

With a *Letter* to the Reverend Mr. JAMES DAVENPORT.

By *Charles Chauncy*, D.D.

One of the Pastors of the *first Church* in said *Town*.

—Non sum idoneus ad habenda, aut interpretanda somnia, neque eam facultatem aut scientiam mihi expeto; et pactum feci cum Domino Deo meo, ne vel visiones, vel somnia, vel etiam angelos mihi mittat. Contentus enim sum hoc dono, quod habeo scripturam sanctam, quæ abunde docet, et suppeditat omnia, quæ sunt necessaria cum ad hanc, tum ad futuram vitam. Huic credo, et acquiesco, ac certus sum, me non posse falli.—Moveor infinita illa multitudo illusionum, præstigiæ, imposturarum, quibus mundus horribiliter sub papatu, longo tempore, deceptus est per sathanam: Deinde sufficientia scripturæ sanctæ, cui si non adhibuero fidem, profectò nec angelo, nec visioni, nec somnio facile credam: *Lutberus*, in Comment. in Gen. 37. fol. 6. Edit. An. 1554.

—Multi enim fanatici spiritus me adorti sunt, quorum alius somnia, alius visiones, alius revelationes jactabat, quibus nitebantur me erudire. Sed respondi, me non expetere ejusmodi revelationes; et si quæ offerentur, me iis non habiturum fidem. Idque ardentibus votis precatus sum, ut daret mihi Deus certum sensum et intellectum scripturæ sanctæ. Si enim verbum habeo, scio me recta via ingredi, nec facile falli aut errare posse. Hæc mea sententia est, quam non muto. *Ibid* ad Cap. 40. fol. 61.

B O S T O N :

Printed by J. DRAPER, for S. ELIOT in Cornhill, and J. BLANCHARD at the Bible and Crown on Dock-Square. MDCCLXII.

ENTHUSIASM

delivered and executed against

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the Lords DAY after the COMMENCEMENT

1742

With a Letter to the Reverend Mr. JAMES DAVENPORT.

By Charles D.D.



One of the Trustees in said Town.

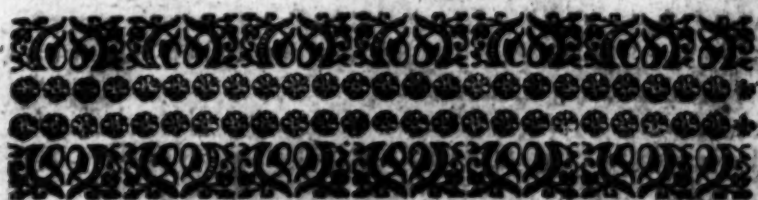
Non tam recte ad habendam, aut interpretandam hominis
negue eam facilius in aut scientiam nihil expere; et primum
secum domos. Deo meo, ne vel videret, vel sciret, vel
erant agnosce nihil sciret. Constat enim cum hoc bono
quod habeo scirentiam habeam, quod bonum digne, et sapienter
in omnia, quod non recte cum ad hanc, tam ad hanc
viam. Hic credo, et agnosco, et recte me, me non recte
tali. Movet hanc illa multitudine illud, prae-
cipue, inquit, quod non recte inquit, prae-
longo tempore, hanc est per hanc: Deinde scirentiam
scirentiam habet, et non recte hanc, prae-
negotio, nec videret, nec scirentiam scirentiam.
Comment. in Gen. c. 1. v. 1. et 2. v. 1. et 3. v. 1.

Multum enim sapientiam habet, et non recte
scirentiam, aut videret, aut scirentiam scirentiam, prae-
paratur me scirentiam. Sed respondet, et non recte
scirentiam: et si quod offerunt, me non recte
hanc agnosce, et videret, et scirentiam, et scirentiam
tam recte, et scirentiam, et scirentiam, et scirentiam
hanc, et non recte, et scirentiam, et scirentiam, et scirentiam
et non recte, et scirentiam, et scirentiam, et scirentiam.

B O S T O N :

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Nathan Hympton.



LETTER

To the REVEREND

Mr. James Davenport,

Pastor of the Church of CHRIST, in SOUTH-HOLD,
on LONG-ISLAND, now in BOSTON.

Reverend Sir,

YOUR coming to BOSTON, under the influence of impulses and impressions, taking them for a call from GOD; and your manner of conduct since you have been in town, (conformable in some measure to what it has been in other places) was the occasion of my studying, and preaching, and afterwards giving way to the publication of the following *Sermon*: And, as I think, there is that in it, which may be a word in season to a gentleman of your cast of mind, I herewith make a present of it to you; and shall be glad, if it may be of service to you, as I hope it will to others, guarding them against the wilds of a heated imagination.

When you came to my house, some days ago, to inquire into the reason of the hope that was in me, my intention was, to deal plainly and faithfully with you:

B

And

And I believe, you do not think, I was wanting upon that head. Whether you heard what I then said with *pity towards me*, or becoming *reflections on your self*, I know not: Time may discover which. But whatever the working of your mind was, I am abundantly confirm'd in it, that your *real* character was fairly laid open before you.

I doubt not, you verily think, GOD sent you hither; and that your preaching here is by *immediate* commission from *him*: But others must be excus'd, if they han't the same tho't of the matter. They are in the opinion, *your own flock is your proper charge*; and can't easily be bro't to believe, that GOD would *call* you to leave them, without making way for their supply in the mean time. This, you may think, *he* has done: But others are of a different mind; those, to be sure, are so, who know what a *weak, raw, illiterate, young man*, you have sent to them; one, who lived in these parts, and gave sufficient proof of his *ignorance*, and *rashness*, and *unkindness*, as well as other things, I shan't here mention.

But that, more especially, which satisfies me, as well as many others, that you are misled in the tho't of being sent by GOD, in an *extraordinary* manner, to this place, is, the *mischief* you are like to do here. What good you may have been the means of elsewhere, I know not: But I am well assured, instead of *good*, you will be the *occasion* of much *hurt*, to the interest of religion in these churches. Your *manner* in speaking, as well as *what you say*, seems rather calculated, at least at some times, to disturb the *imagination*, than inform the *judgment*. And I am fully persuaded, you too often mistake the *mechanical* operations of *violent voice* and *action*, for impressions of another kind. Some are not without fear, least by your imprudencies, you should do much towards bringing *conversion*, the very *name* of it, into contempt. 'Tis certain, many good people are offend'd; and those, who have no serious concern about religion, are in danger of throwing it off, as a wild, disorderly, imaginary business. And if, by your extravagant conduct, you should excite such prejudices in the minds of people against christianity, as should *unhappily* prove the

the occasion of their ruin, would it not afford just ground of the most severe reflections on your self? The preaching of CHRIST crucified, may be, 'tis true, a stumbling-block to some, and foolishness to others; and the preachers, at the same time, a sweet savour to God, even in them that perish. But how will this justify real weaknesses, and just occasions of offence? If, under the notion of preaching CHRIST, men will run into open imprudencies, and set religion in such an angry light by their unguarded conduct, as eventually issues in great damage to men's souls, they are certainly chargeable with it; and to a greater degree of guilt, than they may be sufficiently aware of. *Enthusiastic wildness has slain its thousands.* This, Sir, deserves your most serious consideration. And while you are so ready to fasten on others the guilt of the blood of souls, it would not be amiss, if you were a little more critical in examining, how far you may, *your self*, be guilty in the like kind. This is a momentous affair. And *self-deceit* will be no more excusable in you, than in others. *Be not high-minded, but fear.* Encourage a jealousy of your self, at least, so far as to look over your conduct, and compare it faithfully with that grand rule of trial, the word of God. I bear you record, you have a zeal of God; but if, in any great instances, 'tis a zeal not governed by knowledge, or not tempered with prudence, or not accompanied with charity, you may, be you ever so confident you are in the right, bring guilt upon your self, as well as do hurt to others.

Your design, in going thro' the town, from one minister to another, to examine into their religious experiences, you have begun to open. You have not indeed, as yet, particularly pronounced sentence, and call'd upon people, (as has been your usual way) to separate from this and the other minister, as being in a carnal state; tho', if I have been rightly inform'd, you have, in general, address'd to God in prayer, as to him who knew, that the greatest part of the ministers in town were unconverted. How far this may tend to prejudice people against their ministry, I can't certainly say; but I have no such apprehension of your importance, as to be afraid of any great inconvenience arising herefrom.

Some over-zealous persons may be made still more uncharitable; but by far the better part of the town, both for number, and solid piety, are aware of this device of *satan*; and, I trust, upon their guard against any bad impressions from it. I am therefore more concern'd for you, than in fear of any hurt you are capable of doing the ministers. You are certainly in a wrong way of thinking, or you would not be able, with the name of GOD in your mouth, to violate that solemn statute of heaven, JUDGE NOT.

Suffer me, *Sir*, to take this opportunity, to beseech you in the bowels of CHRIST JESUS, and as you regard your own soul, to review your conduct in this matter of *rash, and uncharitable judging*. You know, how many worthy ministers you have publickly condemned, as carnal and unconverted; tho', so far as is visible, they have been an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity: And you know also, how, by this means, you have obstructed their usefulness; alienated the hearts of their people from them; and encouraged heats and animosities, which have arisen, in some places, to open divisions and separations. And can you reflect upon this, and be easy in your mind? Have you had no misgivings of heart? No inward relentings? No secret twinges of conscience? I can't but think, this has been, at times, the case with you. I am sure, if you han't been in trouble of soul, 'tis not because you han't had just reason to be so: And I believe, if ever GOD gives you a sound mind, you will cry to him from the deeps, for this strange conduct you have unhappily fallen into.

You will doubtless say, you are in the right; you are sure of it: Your mind has been impressed by the DIVINE SPIRIT; and you act in this matter, under his special influence. But is this any more than every enthusiast may plead in vindication of his conduct, be it ever so wild? What says the apostle PAUL, who spake under the inspiration of GOD? Does he not bring the pretences of every man, who calls himself SPIRITUAL, i. e. pretends to a more than ordinary guidance of the SPIRIT, to the standard of scripture, to be tried by that unerring

unerring rule ? And are you able to stand the tryal by *this book* of God ? What is there, in the sacred volumes, that will justify your going about, from one part of the country to another, enquiring into the state of the souls, particularly, of *ministers*, and declaring them, most commonly, unconverted ; Tho' they don't open their *hearts* to you, and their *lives* give credit to their profession ? What is *judging another man's servant*, if this is not ? And how can you be said, while you act thus, to be in the exercise of *charity*, that *charity* which *thinketh no evil, believeth all things, hopeth all things* ? Is there any meaning to these texts ? Can persons be at all guilty of the sin of uncharitable judging ? 'Tis hard to say, where-in they can be guilty, if you are not.

You may, perhaps, plead the danger of an *unconverted ministry* to the souls of men. But be the danger of this as great as it will, it can never be a good reason, why you should assume a *divine prerogative*, and act as tho' you were the *constituted judge* of your brethren. 'Tis true, where ministers make a discovery of a *bad heart*, by that which is *outwardly bad*, they may justly be condemned : But in no other case ; to be sure, not *publickly*. We have no way of judging but by what is *outward and visible* : Nor are we capable of judging any other way. And to leave this way, and go into that of judging from *men's hearts* ; it tends to nothing, in the nature of things, but to destroy the peace of churches, and fill the world with contention and confusion : And of this you have had proof in your own conduct ; sufficient, if you will suitably attend to it, to work conviction in you.

But this you cannot do, while you give heed to *impulses*, and guide your self by them, taking them for discoveries of the will of God. Your *grand error* lies here : And 'tis a more dangerous one, than you may be ready to imagine. There is nothing, while in this state of mind, but you may be bro't to : And how far God may suffer you to be led aside, is known only to himself. Others, who have appear'd as zealous for CHRIST as you have done, have been as bold and daring in judging their neighbours, as much under an *imaginary* divine conduct in every thing, and as sure of it

as you have been, have at length run into all the wilds of delusion. I beg, Sir, you would take warning. Whatever you may think of your self, you have certainly a *beated imagination*. 'Tis too evident to be denied, that you too often take the *motions of your own mind*, for *divine communications*. A flagrant instance of this, you gave your hearers not long since, when you told them, it was *impressed upon your mind*, that the day of judgment was at the door, and you were as sure of it as of some thing you then saw with your eyes. A thousand enthusiasts have deluded themselves and others with the same impression, looking upon it as a revelation from God. And you might have known it to have been a vain imagination, if you had only considered, that the knowledge of the time of the judgment is a secret, the FATHER hath so reserved in his own breast, as that the SON HIMSELF, as man, was ignorant of it. And if this day is to come unawares, and as a thief in the night, you could never be called of God to give warning of the time of its approach. To be sure, if your impression about the nearness of the judgment was from God, your proposal soon after it, to raise monies for the building a school, or college, under the name of a *Shepherd's Tent*, that the churches might be supplied with converted ministers, must be own'd to have had its rise from mere fancy. And this, no doubt, will generally be the thro't of the town upon it; especially, if what is commonly said, be true, that one of the persons to be concern'd in the management of this affair, is a gentleman that has been lately turn'd out of the ministry, because among other things, he spake most contemptuously of the holy scriptures.—But I must not be too long.

And now, having spoken my mind so freely, if you deal with me as you have done with much better men, I may expect to be called a poor, carnal, unconverted wretch. But I assure you beforehand, I esteem it a very small thing to be judged by your Judgment; and the rather, because I certainly know, you are ignorant of my state towards God.

But however you act towards me, I presume not to judge you. To your own master ye stand, or fall. I have taken

taken notice only of that in you, which is visible to the world; And tho' I have, and do condemn it, as what is opposite to the plain laws of God; yet, I pronounce no sentence respecting your state. God knows how far you may be under the power of a disturbed imagination; and will make all the favourable allowances your case will admit of: I desire to do so also, and would hope the best concerning you.

I shall add no more but a couple of passages, I think well worthy your serious consideration. One is from Monsieur BANAGE, in his *La Communion Sainte*, page 554, 555. Where speaking of a sett of men in France, he says, "They look upon their neighbours to be more wicked than they really are, and think themselves better than they really are. Under pretence of superiour good conduct in themselves, they ascend the tribunal, they cloath themselves with the rights of the divine being, and boldly pronounce the irrevocable sentence of Damnation." One would think GOD had committed his justice into the hands of these rigorous spiritual men, who are oftentimes more melancholy than holy, that so they might exercise it with supreme authority. Were it even true, that you were the depositaries of divine justice, don't you know that this depositum were dangerous in your hands? Wo to him that abuses it, that acts by passion, or that judges with rashness. Judge not, says the SAVIOUR of the world, for with what judgment ye judge ye shall be judged. By what right do you violate the law of your master? And why do you judge, when it is forbidden?

The other passage is from the famous Mr. JOHN DAVENPORT, my predecessor, and your great-grand-father. In a manuscript sermon of his, having admonished the church of GOD, under troublesome exercises, he goes on in these words, — "But then, would you prevent such exercises for the future, know your duties and do them; neither out-running your calling by an inordinate zeal, nor being too slow in discharging the duties of it. Let the church look neither to the right hand nor to the left, but to the revealed will of CHRIST, our head" and

"and law-giver in all administrations. Let every mem-
 "ber attend the rules of order and edification, in speak-
 "ing and sitting, and in all relations, in church, common-
 "wealth, families, and in both your callings general
 "and particular, and in all your converse and dealings
 "with men. Let every one attend his own work, do
 "his own business, and keep his own place. Prov. 27. 8.
 "As a bird that wandreth from his nest; so is a man
 "that wandreth from his place. All such as are above
 "these duties, as the Familists, have not the SPIRIT OF
 "CHRIST: True believers are otherwise minded."

I am, Sir, wishing you well on all accounts,

your servant in CHRIST,

Boston, July 17. 1742.

Charles Chauncy.





A

Caveat against
ENTHUSIASM.



I C. O. R. XIV. xxxvii.

If any Man among you think himself to be a PROPHET, or SPIRITUAL, let him acknowledge that the Things that I write unto you are the Commandments of the LORD.



ANY Things were amiss in the Church of Corinth, when Paul wrote this Epistle to them. There were envyings, strife and divisions among them, on account of their ministers. Some cried up one, others another: one said, I am of PAUL, another I am of APPOLLOS. They had form'd themselves into parties, and each party so admired the teacher they followed, as to reflect unjust contempt on the other.

Nor was this their only fault. A spirit of pride prevailed exceedingly among them. They were conceited of their gifts, and too generally dispos'd to make an of-
C rentations

A seasonable Caution

tentatious shew of them. From this vain-glorious temper proceeded the forwardness of those that had the gift of *tongues*, to speak in languages which others did not understand, to the disturbance, rather than edification of the church: And from the same principle it arose, that they spake not by turns, but several at once, in the same place of worship, to the introducing such confusion, that they were in danger of being tho't mad.

Nor were they without some pretence to justify these disorders. Their great plea was, that in these things they were guided by the Spirit, acted under his immediate influence and direction. This seems plainly insinuated in the words I have read to you. *If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.* As if the apostle had said, you may imagine your selves to be *spiritual* men, to be under a divine afflatus in what you do; but 'tis all imagination, meer pretence, unless you pay a due regard to the *commandments* I have here wrote to you; receiving them not as the word of man, but of GOD. Make trial of your spiritual pretences by this rule: If you can submit to it, and will order your conduct by it, well; otherwise you only cheat yourselves, while you think yourselves to be *spiritual* men, or *prop'ets*: You are nothing better than *Enthusiasts*; your being acted by the SPIRIT, immediately guided and influenced by him, is meer pretence; you have no good reason to believe any such thing.

From the words thus explained, I shall take occasion to discourse to you upon the following Particulars.

- I. I shall give you some account of *Enthusiasm*, in its nature and influence.
- II. Point you to a rule by which you may judge of persons, whether they are under the influence of *Enthusiasm*.
- III. Say what may be proper to guard you against this unhappy turn of mind,

The

The whole will then be follow'd with some suitable Application.

I. I am in the first place, to give you some account of *Enthusiasm*. And as this is a thing much talk'd of at present, more perhaps than at any other time that has pass'd over us, it will not be tho't unseasonable, if I take some pains to let you into a true understanding of it.

The word, from it's Etymology, carries in it a good meaning, as signifying *inspiration from GOD*: in which sense, the prophets under the old testament, and the apostles under the new, might properly be called *Enthusiasts*. For they were under a divine influence, spake as moved by the HOLY GHOST, and did such things as can be accounted for in no way, but by recurring to an immediate extraordinary power, present with them.

But the word is more commonly used in a bad sense, as intending an *imaginary*; not a *real* inspiration: according to which sense, the *Enthusiast* is one, who has a conceit of himself as a person favoured with the extraordinary presence of the *Deity*. He mistakes the workings of his own passions for divine communications, and fancies himself immediately inspired by the *SPIRIT* of *GOD*, when all the while, he is under no other influence than that of an over-heated imagination.

The cause of this *enthusiasm* is a bad temperament of the blood and spirits; 'tis properly a disease, a sort of madness: And there are few; perhaps, none at all, but are subject to it; tho' none are so much in danger of it as those, in whom *melancholy* is the prevailing ingredient in their constitution. In these it often reigns; and sometimes to so great a degree, that they are really beside themselves, acting as truly by the blind impetus of a wild fancy, as tho' they had neither reason nor understanding.

And various are the ways in which their *enthusiasm* discovers itself.

Sometimes, it may be seen in their countenance. A certain wildness is discernable in their general look and air;

air; especially when their imaginations are mov'd and fired.

Sometimes, it strangely loosens their tongues, and gives them such an energy, as well as fluency and volubility in speaking, as they themselves, by their utmost efforts, can't so much as imitate, when they are not under the enthusiastick influence.

Sometimes, it affects their bodies, throws them into convulsions and distortions, into quakings and tremblings. This was formerly common among the people called *Quakers*. I was myself, when a Lad, an eye-witness to such violent agitations and foamings, in a boisterous female speaker, as I could not behold but with surprize and wonder.

Sometimes, it will unaccountably mix itself with their conduct, and give it such a tincture of that which is freakish or furious, as none can have an idea of, but those who have seen the behaviour of a person in a phrenzy.

Sometimes, it appears in their imaginary peculiar intimacy with heaven. They are, in their own opinion, the special favourites of GOD, have more familiar converse with him than other good men, and receive immediate, extraordinary communications from him. The tho'ts, which suddenly rise up in their minds, they take for suggestions of the SPIRIT; their very fancies are divine illuminations; nor are they strongly inclin'd to any thing, but 'tis an impulse from GOD, a plain revelation of his will.

And what extravagances, in this temper of mind, are they not capable of, and under the specious pretext too of paying obedience to the authority of GOD? Many have fancied themselves acting by immediate warrant from heaven, while they have been committing the most undoubted wickedness. There is indeed scarce any thing so wild, either in *speculation* or *practice*, but they have given into it: They have, in many instances, been

been blasphemers of GOD, and open disturbers of the peace of the world.

But in nothing does the *enthusiasm* of these persons discover it self more, than in the disregard they express to the Dictates of *reason*. They are above the force of argument, beyond conviction from a calm and sober address to their understandings. As for them, they are distinguish'd persons; GOD himself speaks inwardly and immediately to their souls. "They see the light infused into their understandings, and cannot be mistaken; 'tis clear and visible there, like the light of bright sunshine; shews it self and needs no other proof but its own evidence. They feel the hand of GOD moving them within, and the impulses of his SPIRIT; and cannot be mistaken in what they feel. Thus they support themselves, and are sure reason hath nothing to do with what they see and feel. What they have a sensible experience of, admits no doubt, needs no probation". And in vain will you endeavour to convince such persons of any mistakes they are fallen into. They are certainly in the right; and know themselves to be so. They have the SPIRIT opening their understandings and revealing the truth to them. They believe only as he has taught them: and to suspect they are in the wrong is to do dishonour to the SPIRIT; 'tis to oppose his dictates, to set up their own wisdom in opposition to his, and shut their eyes against that light with which he has shined into their souls. They are not therefore capable of being argued with; you had as good reason with the wind.

And as the natural consequence of their being thus sure of every thing; they are not only infinitely stiff and tenacious, but impatient of contradiction, censorious and uncharitable: they encourage a good opinion of none but such as are in their way of thinking and speaking. Those, to be sure, who venture to debate with them about their errors and mistakes, their weaknesses and indiscretions, run the hazard of being stigmatiz'd by them as poor unconverted wretches, without the SPIRIT, under the government of carnal reason, enemies to GOD and religion, and in the broad way to hell.

They

They are likewise positive and dogmatical, vainly fond of their own imaginations, and invincibly set upon propagating them: And in the doing of this, their Powers being awakened, and put as it were, upon the stretch, from the strong impressions they are under, that they are authorized by the immediate command of GOD himself, they sometimes exert themselves with a sort of *extatic* violence: And 'tis this that gives them the advantage, among the less knowing and judicious, of those who are modest, suspicious of themselves, and not too assuming in matters of conscience and salvation. The extraordinary fervour of their minds, accompanied with uncommon bodily motions, and an excessive confidence and assurance, gains them great reputation among the populace; who speak of them as *men of GOD* in distinction from all others, and too commonly hearken to, and reverse their dictate, as tho' they really were, as they pretend, immediately communicated to them from the DIVINE SPIRIT.

This is the nature of *Enthusiasm*, and this its operation, in a less or greater degree, in all who are under the influence of it. 'Tis a kind of religious Phrenzy, and evidently discovers it self to be so, whenever it rises to any great height.

And much to be pitied are the persons who are seized with it. Our compassion commonly works towards those, who, while under distraction, fondly imagine themselves to be Kings and Emperors: And the like pity is really due to those, who, under the power of *enthusiasm*, fancy themselves to be *prophets*, inspired of God, and immediately called and commissioned by him to deliver his messages to the world: And tho' they should run into disorders, and act in a manner that cannot but be condemned, they should notwithstanding be treated with tenderness and lenity; and the rather, because they don't commonly act so much under the influence of a *bad mind*, as a *deluded imagination*. And who more worthy of christian pity than those, who, under the notion of serving GOD and the interest of religion, are filled with zeal, and exert themselves to the utmost, while all the time they are hurting and wounding

wounding the very cause they take so much pains to advance. 'Tis really a pitiable case: And tho' the honesty of their intentions won't legitimate their bad actions, yet it very much alleviates their guilt: We should think as favourably of them as may be, and be dispos'd to judge with mercy, as we would hope to obtain mercy.

But I come

II. In the second place, to point you to a *rule* by which you may judge of persons, whether they are *enthusiasts*, meer pretenders to the immediate guidance and influence of the SPIRIT. And this is, in general, *a regard to the bible, an acknowledgment that the things therein contained are the commandments of GOD*. This is the rule in the text. And 'tis an infallible rule of tryal in this matter: We need not fear judging amiss, while we keep closely to it.

'Tis true, it wont certainly follow, that a man, pretending to be a *prophet*, or *spiritual*, really is so, if he owns the *bible*, and receives the truths therein revealed as the mind of GOD: But the conclusion, on the other hand, is clear and certain; if he pretends to be conducted by the SPIRIT, and disregards the scripture, pays no due reverence to *the things there delivered as the commandments of GOD*, he is a meer pretender, be his pretences ever so bold and confident, or made with ever so much seeming seriousness, gravity, or solemnity.

And the reason of this is obvious; viz. that the things contained in the scripture were wrote by holy men as they were moved by the HOLY GHOST: they were received from GOD, and committed to writing under his immediate, extraordinary influence and guidance. And the divine, ever-blessed SPIRIT is consistent with himself. He cannot be suppos'd to be the author of any *private* revelations that are contradictory to the *public standing* ones, which he has preserved in the world to this day. This would be to set the SPIRIT of truth at variance with himself; than which a greater reproach can't be cast upon him. 'Tis therefore as true, that those are *enthusiastical*, who pretend

to the SPIRIT, and at the same time express a disregard to the scripture, as that the SPIRIT is the great revealer of the things therein declared to us. And we may depend upon the certainty of this conclusion. We have warrant to do so from the *inspired Paul*; and we have the more reason to rely upon the rule he has given us, as he has made it evident to the world, that he was a *prophet*, and *spiritual*, by signs and wonders which he did before the people, by the power of the SPIRIT of GOD.

But the *rule* in the text is yet more particular. It refers especially to *the things wrote by the apostle PAUL*, and which he wrote to the church of Corinth, to rectify the disorders that had crept in among them. And whoever the person be, that pretends to be *spiritual*, to be under the extraordinary guidance of the SPIRIT, and yet acts in contradiction to what the apostle has here wrote, he vainly imagines himself to be under the special guidance of the SPIRIT; he is a downright *enthusiast*.

And here suffer me to make particular mention of some of the things, the apostle has wrote in *this Epistle*, which, whoever will not acknowledge, in deed as well as word, to be the *commandments of GOD*, they are not guided by the SPIRIT, but vainly pretend to be so.

The first thing, in this kind, I would mention, is that which relates to *Ministers*; condemning an undue preference of one to another, the holding one in such admiration as to reflect disgrace on another. This was one of the disorders the Apostle takes notice of, as prevailing in the church of Corinth; and he is particular in his care to give check to this unchristian spirit, which had crumbled them into parties, and introduced among them faction and contention.

Now, whoever, under the pretence of being guided by the spirit, set up one minister in opposition to another, glory in this minister to the throwing undue contempt on that, thereby obstructing his usefulness, and making way for strife and division, they are not really acted

acted by the SPIRIT, whatever they may pretend. For they evidently contradict what the apostle has wrote upon this very head: And if he was inspired the Spirit they are influenced by, cannot be the SPIRIT of GOD.

Not that one minister may not be preferred to another; this is reasonable: But no minister ought to be regarded, as tho' he was the author of our faith; nor, let his gifts and graces be what they will, is he to be so esteemed, as that others must be neglected, or treated in an unbecoming manner. But I shall not enlarge here, having spoken fully to this point, in a sermon you may, some of you, have in your hands.

Another thing the apostle is particular in writing upon, is the *commandment of charity*. And this he declares to be a matter of such essential importance in true christianity, that if a man is really destitute of it, he is nothing in the sight of GOD. Nay, tho' his pretences, his attainments, his gifts, be ever so extraordinary or miraculous; still, if he is without charity he will certainly be rejected of GOD and the LORD JESUS CHRIST. This is beautifully represented in the three first verses of the 13th chapter of this Epistle, in some of the boldest figures. "Tho' I speak, says the apostle, with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And tho' I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge; and tho' I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And tho' I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and tho' I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." As if the apostle had said, tho' a man had the languages of nations, and could speak with the eloquence of angels; tho', like an inspired prophet, he had understanding in the deep counsels of GOD, and knew even all things sacred and divine; tho' he had the faith of miracles, and could do impossibilities; tho' he had the zeal of a martyr, and should give his body to be burned; tho' he had a disposition to almsgiving, and should bestow upon the poor his whole substance;

still, if he was without charity, "that charity which suffereth long, and is kind; that charity which envyeth not, vaunteth not it self, is not puffed up; that charity which beaveth not it self unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; that charity, in fine, which beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeh all things, endureth all things": I say, if he was without this charity, this love of his neighbour, these things would be all nothing; he would notwithstanding be out of favour with GOD, without any interest in CHRIST, and in such circumstances, as that unless there was a change in them, he would certainly perish.

This, in sum, is what the apostle has, in a distinct and peremptory manner, delivered concerning charity.

And in vain may any pretend to be under the extraordinary guidance of the SPIRIT, while in their practice they trample upon this law of christian love. Men may talk of their *impulses* and *impressions*, conceive of them as the call of GOD, and go about, as moved by them, from place to place, imagining they are sent of GOD, and immediately commissioned by him: But if they are censorious and uncharitable; if they harbour in their minds evil surmises of their brethren; if they slander and reproach them; if they claim a right to look into their hearts, make it their business to judge of their state, and proclaim them hypocrites, carnal unregenerate sinners, when at the same time they are visibly of a good conversation in CHRIST; I say, when this is the practice of any, they do not acknowledge what the inspired PAUL has here wrote as the commandment of GOD: They are not therefore acted by the same SPIRIT with which he spake; but are evidently under a spirit of delusion: And this is so obviously the case, that there is no reasonable room to doubt upon the matter.

Charity, my brethren, is the commandment of the gospel by way of eminence. 'Tis the grand mark by which christians are to distinguish themselves from all others.

others. By this, says our SAVIOUR *, *shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love to one another*: Yea, this is the grand criterion by which we are to judge, whether GOD dwelleth in us by his SPIRIT. If we love one another, GOD dwelleth in us ‖. And in the following Verse, *Hereby, i. e. by our loving one another, we know that we dwell in him, and he dwelleth in us, because he hath given us of his SPIRIT*. To pretend therefore that we are led by the SPIRIT, and are under his extraordinary influence, when, in contradiction to the plain laws of JESUS CHRIST, revealed by the SPIRIT, we judge our brother, and set at naught our brother, and plead a right to do so, and are in a disposition to THANK GOD, THAT WE ARE ENABLED TO DO SO; there is not a more sure mark, in all the revelations of GOD, of a BAD HEART, or a DISTEMPERED MIND. If any thing will evidence a man to be a prophet and spiritual, only in his own conceit, this must do it: And if this is not allow'd to be sufficient proof, there is no knowing, when a man is under the influence of *enthusiastick* heat and zeal.

Another thing the apostle bespeaks this church upon, is that *self-conceit* which appear'd among them in the exercise of *spiritual gifts*: And 'tis more than probable, there were those among them, who being vainly puffed up in their minds, behaved as tho' they were *apostles*, or *prophets*, or *teachers*; leaving their own station, and doing the work that was proper to others. It was to rectify such disorders, that the apostle, in the 12th chapter, addresses to them in that language, v. 29. *Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers?* The question carries with it it's own answer, and means the same thing, as when he affirms in the foregoing verse *God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers*, and so on. 'Tis evident from what the apostle here writes, and indeed from the current strain of this whole chapter, that there is in the body of CHRIST, the Church, a distinction of members; some intended for one use, others for another; and that it would bring confusion into the *body mystical*, for one

* John 13. 35. | 1 John 4. 12.

member to be employed in that service which is adapted to another, and is its proper business.

'Tis not therefore the pretence of being moved by the SPIRIT, that will justify *private christians* in quitting their own proper station, to act in that which belongs to another. Such a practice as this naturally tends to destroy that order, GOD has constituted in the church, and may be followed with much less greater than we may be aware of.

'Tis indeed a powerful argument with many, in favour of these persons, their pretending to *impulses*, and a call from GOD; together with their insatiable thirst to do good to soul. And 'tis owing to such pretences as these, that encouragement has been given to the rise of such numbers of *lay-exhorters and teachers*, in one place and another, all over the land. But if 'tis one of the things wrote by the apostle as the *commandment of GOD*, that there should be *officers* in the church, an *order of men* to whom it should belong, as their *proper, stated work*, to exhort and teach, this cannot be the business of others: And if any who think themselves to be *spiritual*, are under *impressions* to take upon them this *ministry*, they may have reason to suspect, whether their *impulses* are any other than the workings of their own imaginations: And instead of being under any divine extraordinary influence, there are just grounds of fear, whether they are not acted from the vanity of their minds: Especially, if they are but beginners in religion; men of weak minds, babes in understanding; as is most commonly the case. The apostle speaks of *noises*, as in danger of being *lifted up with pride, and falling into the condemnation of the devil*: And it is a seasonable caution to this kind of persons. They should study themselves more, and they will see less reason to think their disposition to exhort and teach to be from the SPIRIT OF GOD. And indeed, if the SPIRIT has bid men to *abide in their own callings*, is not conceivable he should influence them to *leave their callings*: And if he has set a mark of disgrace upon *busy-bodies* in other men's matters, 'tis impossible he should put men upon *wandering about from house to house, speaking the things they ought not*. And

And it deserves particular consideration, whether the
suffering, much more the encouraging women, yet
GALs to speak in the assemblies for religious worship,
is not a plain breach of that commandment of the LORD
wherein it is said, *Let your women keep silence in the
churches; for it is not permitted to them to speak.*
It is a shame for women to speak in the church. After
such an express constitution, designedly made to restrain
WOMEN from speaking in the church; with what face
can such a practice be pleaded for? They may pretend,
they are moved by the SPIRIT; and such numbers of
themselves may be encouraged by others; but make
apostle speak by the SPIRIT, when he delivered this
commandment, they can't act by the SPIRIT when they
break it. This plain case, these FEMALE EXHORTERS
are condemned by the apostle; and if all the command-
ment of the LORD, that they should not speak, they are
spiritual only in their own throats, while they attempt
to do so.

The last thing I shall mention is written by the apo-
stle, is that which obliges to a just decorum in speaking
in the house of GOD. It was an extravagance these Co-
rinthians had fallen into, their speaking many of them
together, and upon different things, while in the same
place of worship. Now is it, brethren, says the apostle?
When ye come together, every one hath a psalm; hath a
doctrine; hath a tongue; hath a revelation; hath an in-
terpretation. It was this that introduced the confusion
and noise, upon which the apostle declares, if an unbe-
liever should come in among them, he would take them
to be mad. And the commandment he gives them, to
put a stop to this disorder is, that they should speak in
course, one by one, and so that things might be done to
edifying.

And whoever the persons are, who will not acknow-
ledge what the apostle has here said is the commandment
of GOD, and act accordingly, are influenced by another

spirit than that which moved in him, be their impressions or pretences what they will. The disorder of *EXTRA- TING*, and *PRAYING*, and *SINGING*, and *LAUGHING*, in the same house of worship, at one and the same time, is as great as was that, the apostle blames in the church of Corinth: And whatever the persons, guilty of such gross irregularity may imagine, and however they may plead their being under the influence of the SPIRIT, and mov'd by him, 'tis evidently a breach upon common order and decency: yea, a direct violation of the commandment of GOD, written on purpose to prevent such disorders: And to pretend the direction of the SPIRIT in such a flagrant instance of extravagant conduct, is to reproach the blessed SPIRIT, who is not, as the apostle's phrase is, *the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints*.

In these, and all other instances, let us compare men's pretences to the SPIRIT by the SCRIPTURE: And if their conduct is such as can't be reconcil'd with an acknowledgment of the things therein revealed, as the commandments of GOD, their pretences are vain, they are prophets and spiritual, only in their own proud imaginations. I proceed now to

III. The third thing, which is to caution you against giving way to *enthusiastic impressions*. And here much might be said,

I might warn you from the *dishonour* it reflects upon the SPIRIT of GOD. And perhaps none have more reproach'd the blessed SPIRIT, than men pretending to be under his extraordinary guidance and direction. The variest fancies, the vainest imaginations, the strongest delusions, they have father'd on him. There is scarce any absurdity in principle, or irregularity in practice, but he has been made the patron of it. — And what a stone of stumbling has the wildness of *Enthusiasm* been to multitudes in the world? What prejudices have been hereby excited in their minds against the very being of the SPIRIT? What temptations have been thrown in their way to dispute his OFFICE

as the SANCTIFIER and COMFORTER of God's people? And how have they been over-come to disown His work, when it has been really wrought in the hearts of men?

I might also warn you from the damage it has done in the world. No greater mischiefs have arisen from any quarter. It is indeed the genuine source of infinite evil. POPERY it self can't been the mother of more and greater blasphemies and abominations. It has made strong attempts to destroy all property, to make all things common, *wives as well as goods*. — It has promoted faction and contention; filled the church oftentimes with confusion, and the state sometimes with general disorder. — It has, by its pretended spiritual interpretations, made void the most undoubted laws of God. It has laid aside the *gospel sacraments* as weak and carnal things; yea, this *superior light within* has, in the opinion of thousands, rendered the *bible* a *useless dead letter*. — It has made men fancy themselves to be *prophets* and *apostles*; yea, some have taken themselves to be *CHRIST* Jesus; yea, the blessed God himself. It has, in one word, been a pest to the church in all age, as great an enemy to real and solid religion, as perhaps the grossest *infidelity*.

I might go on and warn you from the danger of it to yourselves. If you should once come under the influence of it, none can tell whither it would carry you. There is nothing so wild and frantick, but you may be reconcil'd to it. And if this should be your case, your recovery to a right mind would be one of the most difficult things in nature. There is no coming at a thorow-paced *enthusiasm*. He is proof against every method of dealing with him. Would you apply to him from reason? That he esteems a carnal thing, and flees from it as from the most dangerous temptation. Would you rise higher,

Undoubted instances of these, and many other things of a like nature, are well known to such as are, in any measure, acquainted with the *history of the church*.

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and speak to him from *Scripture*? It will be to as little purpose. For if he pays any regard to it, 'tis only as it falls in with his own pre-conceiv'd notions. He interprets the scripture by *impulses* and *impressions*, and sees no meaning in it, only as he explains it from his own fancy. — 'Tis infinitely difficult to convince a man grown giddy and conceiv'd under the false notion, that the good SPIRIT teaches him every thing. His apprehended inspiration sets him above all means of conviction. He rather despises than hearkens to the most reasonable advices that can be given him.

But as the most suitable guard against the first tendencies towards *enthusiasm*, let me recommend to you the following words of counsel.

1. Get a true understanding of the *proper work* of the SPIRIT, and don't place it in those things wherein the gospel does not make it to consist. The work of the SPIRIT is different now from what it was in the first days of christianity. Men were then favoured with the extraordinary presence of the SPIRIT. He came upon them in miraculous gifts and powers, as a spirit of prophecy, of knowledge, of revelation, of tongue, of miracles: But the SPIRIT is not now to be expected in these ways. His grand business lies in preparing men's minds for the grace of GOD, by true *humiliation*, from an apprehension of sin, and the necessity of a *Saviour*, then in working in them *faith* and *repentance*, and such a *change* as shall turn them from the power of sin and satan unto GOD, and in fine, by carrying on the good work he has begun in them, assisting them in duty, strengthening them against temptation, and in a word, preserving them blameless thro' faith unto salvation: And all this he does by the word and prayer, as the great means in the accomplishment of these purposes of mercy.

Herein, in general, consists the work of the SPIRIT. It does not lie in giving men *private revelations*, but in opening their minds to understand the *publick ones* contained in the scripture. It does not lie in *sudden impulses* and *impressions*, in *immediate calls* and *extraordinary missions*. Men mistake the business of the SPIRIT, if they

they understand by it such things as these. And 'tis, probably, from such unhappy mistakes, that they are at first betrayed into *enthusiasm*. Having a wrong notion of the *work* of the SPIRIT, 'tis no wonder if they take the uncommon sallies of their own minds for his influences.

You cannot, my brethren, be too well acquainted with what the *bible* makes the *work* of the HOLY GHOST, in the affair of salvation: And if you have upon your minds a clear and distinct understanding of this, it will be a powerful guard to you against all *enthusiastical impressions*.

2. Keep close to the *Scripture*, and admit of nothing for an impression of the SPIRIT, but what agrees with that unerring rule. Fix it in your minds as a truth you will invariably abide by, that the *bible* is the grand test, by which every thing in religion is to be tried; and that you can, at no time, nor in any instance, be under the guidance of the SPIRIT of GOD, much less his *extraordinary* guidance, if what you are led to, is inconsistent with the things there revealed, either in point of *faith* or *practice*. And let it be your care to compare the motions of your minds, and the workings of your imaginations and passions, with the *rule* of GOD's word. And see to it, that you be impartial in this matter: Don't make the rule bend to your pre-conceiv'd notions and inclinations; but repair to the *bible*, with a mind dispos'd, as much as may be, to know the truth as it lies nakedly and plainly in the *scripture* it self. And whatever you are moved to, reject the motion, esteem it as nothing more than a yain fancy, if it puts you upon any method of *thinking*, or *acting*, that can't be evidently reconcil'd with the *revelations* of GOD in his word.

This adherence to the bible, my brethren, is one of the best preservatives against *enthusiasm*. If you will but express a due reverence to this *book* of GOD, making it the great rule of judgment, even in respect of the SPIRIT's *influences* and *operations*, you will not be in much danger of being led into delusion. Let that be your inquiry under all suppos'd *impulses* from the SPI-

RIT, *What saith the scripture? To the law, and to the testimony*: If your impressions, and imagined spiritual motions agree not therewith, 'tis because there is no hand of the SPIRIT of GOD in them: They are only the workings of your own imaginations, or something worse; and must at once, without any more ado, be rejected as such.

3. Make use of the *Reason* and *Understanding* GOD has given you. This may be tho't an ill-advis'd direction, but 'tis as necessary as either of the former. Next to the *Scripture*, there is no greater enemy to *enthusiasm*, than *reason*. 'Tis indeed impossible a man shou'd be an *enthusiast*, who is in the just exercise of his understanding; and 'tis because men don't pay a due regard to the sober dictates of a well inform'd mind, that they are led aside by the delusions of a vain imagination. Be advis'd then to shew yourselves men, to make use of your reasonable powers; and not act as the *horse* or *mule*, as tho' you had no understanding.

'Tis true, you must not go about to set up your own *reason* in *opposition* to *revelation*: Nor may you entertain a tho't of making *reason* your *rule* instead of *scripture*. The *bible*, as I said before, is the *great rule* of religion, the grand test in matters of salvation: But then, you must use your reason in order to understand the *bible*: Nor is there any other possible way, in which, as a reasonable creature, you shou'd come to an understanding of.

You are, it must be acknowledged, in a corrupt state. The fall has introduc'd great weakness into your reasonable nature. You can't be too sensible of this; nor of the danger you are in of making a wrong judgment, thro' prejudice, carelessness, and the undue influence of sin and lust. And to prevent this, you can't be too solicitous to get your *nature sanctified*: Nor can you depend too strongly upon the divine grace to assist you in your search after truth: And 'tis in the way of due dependance on GOD, and the influences of his SPIRIT, that I advise you to the use of your reason: And in this way, you must make use of it. How else will you know

know what is a revelation from GOD? What shou'd hinder your entertaining the same tho't of a *pretended* revelation, as of a *real* one, but your reason discovering the falshood of the one, and the truth of the other? And when in the enjoyment of an undoubted revelation from GOD, as in the case of the *scripture*, How will you understand its meaning, if you throw by your reason? How will you determine, that this, and not that, is its true sense, in this and the other place? Nay, if no reasoning is to be made use of, are not all the senses that can be put on scripture equally proper? Yea, may not the most contrary senses be receiv'd at the same time, since reason only can point out the inconsistency between them? And what will be sufficient to guard you against the most monstrous extravagancies, in *principle* as well as *practice*, if you give up your understandings? What have you left, in this case, to be a check to the wantonness of your imaginations? What shou'd hinder your following every idle fancy, till you have lost yourselves in the wilds of falshood and inconsistency?

You may, it is true, misuse your reason: And this is a consideration that shou'd put you upon a due care, that you may use it well; but no argument why you shou'd not use it at all: And indeed, if you shou'd throw by your reason as a useless thing, you would at once put your selves in the way of all manner of delusion.

But, it may be, you will say, you have committed yourselves to the *guidance* of the SPIRIT; which is the best preservative. Herein you have done well; nothing can be objected against this method of conduct: Only take heed of mistakes, touching the SPIRIT'S *guidance*. Let me enquire of you, how is it the SPIRIT preserves from delusion? Is it not by opening the understanding, and enabling the man, in the due use of his reason, to perceive the truth of the things of GOD and religion? Most certainly: And, if you think of being led by the SPIRIT without understanding, or in opposition to it, you deceive yourselves. The SPIRIT of GOD deals with men as *reasonable* creatures: And

they ought to deal with themselves in like manner. And while they do thus, making a wise and good use of the understanding, God has given them, they will take a proper means to prevent their falling into delusions; nor will there be much danger of their being led aside by *enthusiastic* heat and imagination.

4. You must not lay too great stress upon the *workings* of your *passions* and *affections*. These will be excited, in a less or greater degree, in the business of religion; And 'tis proper they shou'd. The passions, when suitably mov'd, tend mightily to awaken the *reasonable powers*, and put them upon a lively and vigorous exercise. And this is their proper use: And when address'd to, and excited to this purpose, they may be of good service: whereas we shall mistake the right use of the passions, if we place our religion *only* or *chiefly*, in the heat and fervour of them. The *soul* is the *man*: And unless the *reasonable nature* is suitably wro't upon, the *understanding* enlightned, the *judgment* convinc'd, the *will* perswaded, and the *mind* intirely chang'd, it will avail but to little purpose; tho' the passions shou'd be set all in a blaze. This therefore you shou'd be most concern'd about. And if while you are solicitous that you may be in transports of affection, you neglect your more noble part, your reason and judgment, you will be in great danger of being carried away by your imaginations. This indeed leads directly to *Enthusiasm*: And you will in vain, endeavour to preserve yourselves from the influence of it, if you a'nt duly careful to keep your passions in their proper place, under the government of a well inform'd understanding. While the passions are uppermost, and bear the chief sway over a man, he is in an unsafe state: None knows what he may be bro't to. You can't therefore be too careful to keep your passions under the regimen of a *sober judgment*. 'Tis indeed a matter of necessity, as you would not be led aside by delusion and fancy.

5. In the last place here, you must not forget to go to God by *prayer*. This is a duty in all cases, but in none more than the present. If left to yourselves, your own wisdom and strength, you will be insufficient

sufficient for your own security; perpetually in danger from your *imagination*s, as well as the other enemies of your *souls*. You can't be too sensible of this; nor can you, from a sense of it, apply with too much importunity to the FATHER of *mercies*, to take pity upon you, and send you such a supply of grace as is needful for you. You must not indeed think, that your duty lies in the business of prayer, and nothing else. You must use your own endeavours, neglect nothing that may prove a guard to you: But together with the use of other means, you must make known your request to God by prayer and supplication. You must daily commit the keeping of your soul to him; and this you must particularly be careful to do in times of more special hazard; humbly hoping in God to be your help: And if he shall please to undertake for you, no delusion shall ever have power over you, to seduce you; but, possessing a sound mind, you shall go on in the uniform, steady service of your maker and generation, till of the mercy of God, thro' the merits of the REDEEMER, you are crowned with eternal life.

But I shall now draw towards a close, by making some suitable *application* of what has been said, And,

1. Let us beware of charging God *foolishly*, from what we have heard of the *nature*, and *influence* of *enthusiasm*. This may appear a dark article in God's government of the world; but it stands upon the same foot with his permission of other evils, whether *natural* or *moral*. And, if we shou'd not be able to see perfectly into the reason of this dispensation, we shou'd rather attribute it to our own ignorance, than reply against God. We may assure ourselves, a wise, and good, and holy God, would not have suffered it thus to be, if there were not some great and valuable ends to be hereby answered.

Greater advantages may, in the end, accrue to true religion, by the sufferance of an *enthusiastic* spirit, and the prevalence of it, at certain times, than we may be capable of discerning at present.

It may furnish both opportunity and occasion for the trial of those, who call themselves christians; whether they have just notions of religion, and courage and faithfulness to stand up for *real* truths, against *meer imaginary* ones.—It may serve as a foil to set off the beauty and glory of true, genuine christianity.—It may tend to the encouragement of reasonable and solid religion; and, in the run of things, recommend it, in the most effectual manner, to men's choice and practice.—In a word, It may put men upon a more thorough examination into the grounds of the christian religion, and be the means of their being, more generally, established in its truth, upon the best and most reasonable evidence.

These are some of the ends capable of being answered by the permission of a *spirit of enthusiasm*, and the prevalence of it, for a while. And as to the persons themselves led aside by it, it is, in the same way to be reconcil'd with the general goodness of God towards men, as in the case of *distraction*, and the evil effects consequent thereupon. The persons, heated with *enthusiastic* imaginations, are either, in a faulty sense, accessory to this unhappy turn of mind, or they are not: If the *latter*, they may depend upon the pity and mercy of God, notwithstanding the extravagancies they may run into; yes, if they are good men, as is, doubtless, sometimes the case, it may be hoped, that this evil which has happened to them, will, after the manner of other sufferings, work together for good to them: But if thro' the pride of their hearts, a vain-glorious temper, accompanied with rashness and arrogance, or the like, they are really accessory to their own delusion, and mad conduct following therefrom, let them not think to cast the blame on God: They do but reap the fruit of what they themselves have sown. And if they shou'd be totally delivered up, as has sometimes been the case, to the devices of their own hearts, and the *lying inspirations* of wicked spirits, they can fault no body but themselves. God is just while he makes them an example for the warning of others, lest they also be given up to believe lies. And he is *good* as well as just; good to others, in putting them hereby upon their guard, tho' he is severe towards them.

2. Let

2. Let none, from what has been offered, entertain prejudices in their minds against the *operations* of the SPIRIT. There is such a thing as his influence upon the hearts of men. No consistent sense can be put upon a great part of the *bible*, unless this be acknowledged for a truth: Nor is it any objection against its being so, that there has been a great deal of *enthusiasm* in the world, many who have mistaken the motions of their own passions for divine operations. This, it must be acknowledged, shou'd make us cautious, putting us upon a careful examination of whatever offers itself, as a communication from the SPIRIT, that we deceive not ourselves: But its no argument, why we shou'd conceive a slighty tho't, either of the SPIRIT, or his influences, really made upon the minds of men. Much less is it a just ground of exception against the SPIRIT's *operations*, that they may be counterfeited; that men may make an appearance, as if they were acted by the SPIRIT, when, all the while, they have no other view in their pretences, but to serve themselves. This has often been the case; and points it out as a matter of necessity, that we take heed to ourselves, if we would not be impos'd upon by a *fair shew*, and *good words*: But at the same time, 'tis no reason, why we shou'd think the worse of the blessed SPIRIT, or of those influences that are really *his*.

Let us be upon our guard as to this matter. Many, from what they have seen or heard of the strange conduct of men, pretending to be under *divine impressions*, have had their minds insensibly leaven'd with prejudices against the things of the SPIRIT. O let it be our care, that we be not thus wro't upon! And the rather, least it shou'd prove the ruin of our souls. This, perhaps, we may not be afraid of: But the danger is great, if we take up wrong notions of the SPIRIT, or encourage an unbecomming tho't of his influences in the business of salvation, least we shou'd grieve the *good SPIRIT*, and he shou'd leave us to perish in a state of alienation from GOD, and true holiness.

'Tis worthy our particular remark, it is by the powerful operation of the holy SPIRIT on the hearts of men,

men, that they are chang'd from the love and practice of sin, to the love and practice of holiness; and have those tempers form'd in them, whereby they are made meet for the glory to be hereafter revealed; Not can this be done, in any way, without the *special influence* of the blessed SPIRIT.

And is it likely, *He* shou'd be present with men to such gracious purposes, if they suffer their minds to be impressed with contemptuous tho'ts of him? If they begin to call in question his *office*, as the *great dispenser of divine grace*, or look upon his operations as all delusion and imagination.

We must have upon our minds a just tho't of the good SPIRIT, and of his *influences*. This is a matter of necessity. O let us encourage a steady faith in him, as that glorious person, by whom, and by whom alone, we can be prepared in this world, for happiness in the world that is come. And let nothing, no wildness of enthusiasm, ever be able to tempt us to call this in question. And let us so believe in the HOLY GHOST, as to put ourselves under his guidance; and let our dependance be on him for grace to help us in every time of need.

Only let us look to it, that we take no *impressions* for his but such as really are so: And let us not be satisfied, 'till we experience within ourselves the *real effects* of the SPIRIT's operations; such as are common to all that are in CHRIST JESUS; and always have been, and always will be, accompanied with a *holy frame of soul*, and a *conversation becoming the Gospel*.

3. Let not any think *ill* of religion, because of the *ill* representation that is made of it by *enthusiasts*. There may be danger of this; especially, in regard of those who have not upon their minds a serious sense of GOD and the things of another world. They may be ready to judge of religion from the *copy* given them of it, by those who are too much led by their fancies; and to condemn it, in the gross, as a
will

wild, imaginary, inconsistent thing. But this is to judge too hastily and rashly. Religion ought not to suffer in the opinion of any, because of the imprudencies or extravagancies of those, who call themselves the friends of it. Any thing may be abused: Nor is there any thing but has actually been abused. And why shou'd any think the worse of religion, because some who make more than ordinary pretences to it, set it forth in an ugly light by their conduct relative to it?

There is such a thing as real religion, let the conduct of men be what it will; and 'tis, in it's nature, a sober, calm, reasonable thing: Nor is it an objection of any weight against the sobriety or reasonableness of it, that there have been *enthusiasts*, who have acted as tho' it was a wild, imaginary business. We should not make our estimate of religion as exhibited in the behaviour of men of a *fanciful* mind; to be sure, we should not take up an ill opinion of it, because in the example they give of it, it don't appear so amiable as we might expect. This is unfair. We shou'd rather judge of it from the conduct of men of a *sound judgment*; whose lives have been such a uniform, beautiful transcript of that which is just and good, that we can't but think well of religion, as display'd in their example.

But however religion may appear as viewed in the lives, even of the best men, 'tis a lovely thing, as required by GOD, and pourtrayed in the bible. We shou'd take our sentiments of it from this *book of GOD*; and this, in the calm and sober exercise of our understandings: And if we view it, as 'tis here delineated, we can't but approve of it, the *doctrines* it teaches, and the *duties* it requires, whether they relate to GOD, our selves, or our neighbour; they are all so reasonable in themselves, and worthy of the GOD, the stamp of whose authority they bear.

Let us fetch our notions of religion from the scripture: And if men, in their practice, set it in a disadvantageous light, let us be upon our guard, that we don't take up prejudices against it. This will blind our eyes, and may, by degrees, prepare the way to our throwing off all concern

cern about religion ; yea, we may be bro't to treat it even with contempt ; than which, nothing can be more dangerous, or put our salvation to a greater risque.

4. Let us esteem those as *friends* to religion, and not *enemies*, who warn us of the danger of *enthusiasm*, and would put us upon our guard, that we be not led aside by it. As the times are, they run the hazard of being call'd *enemies* to the *holy SPIRIT*, and may expect to be ill-spoken of by many, and loaded with names of reproach : But they are notwithstanding the best friends to religion, and it may be, it will more and more appear, that they have all along been so. They have been stigmatized as *OPPOSERS* of the *WORK OF GOD* ; but 'tis a great mercy of *GOD*, there have been such *OPPOSERS* : This land had, in all probability, been over-run with confusion and distraction, if they had acted under the influence of the same *heat and zeal*, which some others have been famous for.

'Tis really best, people shou'd know there is such a thing as *enthusiasm*, and that it has been, in all ages, one of the most dangerous enemies to the church of *GOD*, and has done a world of mischief : And 'tis a kindness to them to be warn'd against it, and directed to the proper methods to be preserved from it. 'Tis indeed, one of the best ways of doing service to *real* religion, to distinguish it from that which is *imaginary* : Nor shou'd ministers be discouraged from endeavouring this, tho' they shou'd be ill-tho't, or evil-spoken of. They shou'd beware of being too much under the influence of that *fear of man*, which bringeth a snare ; which is evidently the case, where they are either silent, or dare not speak out faithfully and plainly, lest they shou'd be called *PHARISES* or *HYPOCRITES*, and charged with *LEADING SOULS TO THE DEVIL*. 'Tis a *small matter* to be thus judged and reviled ; and we shou'd be above being affrighted from duty by this, which is nothing more than the *breath* of poor, ignorant, frail man.

There is, I doubt not, a great deal of *real, substantial* religion in the land. The *SPIRIT of GOD* has wrought effectually on the hearts of many, from one time to another :
And

And I make no question he has done so of late, in more numerous instances, it may be, than usual. But this, notwithstanding, there is, without dispute, a *spirit of enthusiasm*, appearing in one place and another. There are those, who make great pretences to the SPIRIT, who are carried away with their imaginations: And some, it may be, take themselves to be *immediately and wonderfully conducted by him*; while they are led only by their own fancies.

Thus it has been in other parts of the world. *Enthusiasm*, in all the *wildness*, and *fury*, and *extravagance* of it, has been among them, and sometimes had a most dreadfully extensive spread. *Ten thousand wild enthusiasts* have appear'd in arms, at the same time; and this too, in defence of *gross opinions*, as well as *enormous actions*. The first discovery therefore of such a spirit, unless due care is taken to give check to its growth and progress, is much to be feared; for there is no knowing, how high it may rise, nor what it may end in.—

The good LORD give us all wisdom, and courage, and conduct, in such a Day as this! And may both *ministers* and *people* behave after such a manner, as that religion may not suffer; but in the end, gain advantage, and be still more universally established.

And, may that grace of GOD, which has appeared to all men, bringing salvation, teach us effectually, to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, and righteously, and godlily in the world: so may we look with comfort for the appearing of our SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST: And when he shall appear in the glory of his FATHER, and with his holy angels, we also shall appear with him, and go away into everlasting life: Which GOD, of his infinite mercy grant may be the portion of us all; for the sake of CHRIST JESUS.

A M E N.

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to be feared; for there is no knowing how high it may
be taken to give check to the war and progress is made
that is only a short of such a fight under the ears
of great power, as well as common sense. The
have spent a great deal of time and money and the
directly extends a good deal of money and the
it has been among them, and they have had a most
man in all the world, and they have been successful in
— That is the best in the world of the world. —

And now I have left a monument as that religion
may not die; but in the end, nothing, can be
left more universally than itself.

And, may that grace of God which is poured to
 sinners, bringing salvation, reach efficaciously to every
 ungodly mind and wicked will, and to life, glory, and
 eternally and gloriously in the world to come we look
 with comfort for the appearing of our SAVIOUR Jesus
 CHRIST: And when he shall appear in the glory of his
 FATHER, and with him all the angels, we shall appear
 with him, and go away into ever lasting life: Which
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VENA

